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II.—WHY WERE THE JEWS BANISHED FROM ITALY IN 19 A. D.?

Historians have been aware that Tiberius, probably at the instance of Sejanus, had the Roman Senate banish the Jews and take other severe measures against them; but nobody has explained the action. It appears indeed to be regarded as a matter destined to remain a mystery for want of sufficient information.

The data are in fact scanty; a careful study of them may however extract the explanation which every student of history must desire. The affair is mentioned by a number of ancient writers, but practically we are dependent on the reports of Josephus and Tacitus.

We begin naturally with Josephus, whose account is more detailed. After relating the sad events which befell in Judea during the governorship of Pilate, he says (*Ant.* 18. 3. 4): "About the same time another dread calamity threw the Jews into confusion, and certain transactions not devoid of disgrace befell in the sanctuary of Isis at Rome. After I shall have recorded the bold attempt of the devotees of Isis, I will direct my story to what occurred among the Jews." He then recounts the outrage committed by one Decius Mundus, a Roman knight, upon Paulina, a Roman lady of high rank and exemplary character, who was the wife of Saturninus, a man of like rank and character. This Decius, consumed with a guilty passion for Paulina, had sought without success to seduce her by bribes to satisfy his desires. Failing in this he had resolved to terminate his life by starvation, but was dissuaded from his purpose by one of his freedwomen, who promised to procure for him the object of his passion. The terms agreed upon, the procuress, knowing that Paulina was a devotee of the Egyptian cult, conspired against her honor with certain priests of Isis, who reported to the great lady that they had had a revelation from the god Anubis bidding her come to the sanctuary to dine with him and enjoy his embraces. The devout Paulina, overjoyed at this signal proof of the divine favor, after obtaining the consent of her husband, repaired to the shrine, where she spent the night

in the arms of the supposed god. Taunted subsequently by Mundus with having granted him in the guise of Anubis what she had previously refused, she disclosed the horrid imposture to her husband, and he in turn reported it to Tiberius. The Emperor, after due inquiry, ordered the temple of Isis demolished, the cult-statue of the goddess cast into the Tiber, the priests and the procuress crucified, and the guilty knight banished.

This narrative concluded, Josephus resumes, "Such were the insolent deeds of the priests in the temple of Isis. Now I return to relate what befell the Jews at Rome at this time, as my account promised before." Thereupon he recounts the tale as follows. A worthless Jew, a fugitive from justice in Judea, conspiring with three equally worthless accomplices and giving out that he expounded the wisdom of the law of Moses, persuaded one Fulvia, a Roman lady of quality who was a proselyte to Judaism, to contribute purple and gold for the temple at Jerusalem; but the men diverted her gifts to their own uses. Tiberius, informed of the matter by Fulvia's husband, who likewise bore the name of Saturninus, ordered all the Jews banished from Rome; and the consuls drafted four thousand of the men and sent them to Sardinia, inflicting severe punishment on a large number who refused to serve in the army lest they be compelled in the service to violate the Jewish law. Thus the Jews were banished from Rome because of the wickedness of four men.

On reading the account of the Jewish historian one gains the impression of a great calamity visited upon a people for a trifling offense. If one doubts the sufficiency of his explanation, —and modern historians have of course doubted it,—one may perhaps conclude that the real cause of these severe measures was the deep-seated animosity against the Jews fostered by their reputation for exclusiveness and their assumption of superior righteousness: a parallel on a vast scale to the ostracism of Aristides. Nevertheless one instinctively questions whether Tiberius, who by Josephus's own account instituted an inquiry before taking the measures of state consequent on the affair of Paulina, could have acted in the case of the Jews without reasons which seemed to him good and sufficient, even if urged to drastic action by Sejanus and others who may have been swayed by prejudice. We shall presently see that the very narrative of Josephus suggests something more than appears upon its face.

We seek in vain for further light on the affair from other Jewish sources. Philo does indeed refer to the matter without giving any information. In *Flaccum*, c. 1, he merely mentions Sejanus as one who has persecuted the Jews: unfortunately the portion of this work which dealt with him has been lost—possibly destroyed of set purpose. In his *Legatio ad Gaium*, cc. 23-24, he does not specify the charges brought against the Jews, but lays stress on the circumstance that but few were implicated in the affair, thus confirming, though in terms less precise, the statement of Josephus that there were only four offenders.

Of Roman writers Suetonius also (*Tiberius*, cc. 35-36) yields nothing of importance because of the vagueness of his statement, which is moreover to all appearances based on the account of Tacitus. In fact Josephus alone mentions the charge against the Jews. Nevertheless it is not unimportant to consider the narrative of Tacitus. We have observed how closely Josephus links the cases of Paulina and Fulvia, though the connection between them indicated by the Jewish historian is merely that of coincidence in time and the parallel is apparently drawn with a view to contrast the insolent outrage of the Egyptians with the venial offense of the Jews.

The Roman historian, too, links the Egyptians and the Jews together in this matter, but quite contrary to what Josephus suggests clearly imputes the greater blame to the latter. Moreover he obviously considers the question as one of unholy rites, which he must have regarded as essentially the same, since he identifies them outright. Indeed, Tacitus not only connects the case of the Jews with that of the Egyptians so intimately as to suggest their practical identity, but he also brings both into the closest relation to the measures adopted by the Roman senate to restrain the licentiousness of women. "The same year," he says (*Annals*, 2. 85), "the licentiousness of women was curbed by severe decrees of the senate, and measures were taken to prevent the venal prostitution of any woman whose grandfather, father, or husband was a Roman knight; for Vistilia, the daughter of a praetor, had made public profession of prostitution before the aediles pursuant to an ancient custom which regarded the confession of shame a sufficient penalty for the unchaste. Her husband Titidius Labeo was brought to question, why in view of his wife's manifest guilt he had failed to enforce the

legal penalty. As he excused himself by pointing out that the term of sixty days allowed for the institution of legal proceedings had not yet elapsed, it was held to suffice if Vistilia were dealt with: she was accordingly banished to the isle of Seriphos. The question also of expelling the Egyptian and Jewish cults was laid before the senate; and it was decreed that four thousand freedmen tainted with that superstition, who were of the proper age, should be deported to Sardinia in order to put down brigandage there, with the thought that if they perished because of the severity of the climate it were small loss; the remainder should depart from Italy unless before a given date they renounced their unholy rites."

Since the total number of four thousand men drafted into the army, according to Tacitus, is precisely that mentioned by Josephus as the Jewish contingent, this passage makes it clear that the measures of the senate were directed chiefly—almost exclusively—against the Jews. The Egyptians here cut an unimportant figure. The action is brought into relation with the steps taken to curb the licentiousness of women, but is clearly distinguished from those concerned with venal prostitution, and connected with religious rites which the historian denounces as unholy. So far as Tacitus may have had in mind the story of Paulina, which we get from Josephus, it is clear that she was not guilty of venal prostitution; which agrees with his distinction. Her case was one of prostitution, indeed, but of a different sort, connected with unholy rites. In the eyes of Tacitus, and presumably in the eyes of the Roman authorities, the Jewish rites were identical with the Egyptian. Moreover, the account of Josephus makes it clear that the cases of Paulina and Fulvia in so far resembled that of Vistilia as they also were Roman ladies of equestrian or senatorial families, whose licentiousness the various measures were intended to curb.

Vistilia was guilty of venal prostitution. Paulina was guilty, however excusably, of religious prostitution. Regarding Fulvia we are left in doubt, because Tacitus, while treating the Egyptians and Jews as practically identical, does not specify the charges in either case, and Josephus, while linking them closely together, represents the offense of his co-religionists as extremely venial. Nevertheless the presumption is obviously very strong

that in the eyes of the Romans the affair of Fulvia was not unlike that of Paulina. Have we, then, no means of determining the charges preferred against the Jews and accepted as established by the Roman authorities?

We have seen that Josephus represents the offense of the Jews as consisting in the misappropriation by certain Jewish impostors of gifts solicited from Fulvia with the understanding that they were to be sent to the temple at Jerusalem. It may possibly occur to someone that in accordance with the decrees of Augustus (Josephus, *Ant.*, 16. 6. 2-5) such conduct might be interpreted as sacrilege. This explanation would, however, be certainly at fault, because the decrees in question had in view the possible seizure of Jewish contributions by Greeks, individuals or states, and provided that the guilty should be delivered over to the Jews for punishment. To the Roman mind, we may add, such sacrilege—even granting that it would have been so accounted—practiced by a Jewish outlaw against the ‘unholy sanctities’ of the Jewish ‘superstition’ could scarcely have sufficed to justify the authorities in taking measures so drastic and embittered.

Now Josephus says that the contribution of Fulvia consisted of gold and purple for the temple at Jerusalem: to what use they were to be put, he does not say. Every student of Hebrew antiquities, however, must recognize at once that the gold and purple were intended for the hangings of the temple. This fact, as we shall see, when duly considered, affords the necessary clew; for if one examines the history of these hangings and notes their inevitable suggestions to the minds of Asiatic and European peoples of antiquity, the interpretation put upon the solicitation of such gifts is not difficult to comprehend.

The Priestly code represents the hangings of the temple as derived from those of the ‘tent of meeting’ constructed by direction of Jehovah for the housing of the ark of the covenant during the journeyings of Israel in the wilderness. Modern scholars are agreed, however, that the ‘tent of meeting’ is in fact nothing but a fictitious replica of the temple supposedly adapted to the nomadic life of the desert, though its construction is such that it could not have been used as the story represents. Nevertheless, before there was a temple proper there was in fact

a 'tent of meeting,' probably not unlike the sukkah¹ of the festivals that furnished the concrete basis out of which Hebrew legend reconstructed the mythical account of the Exodus. It might be shown, if one chose to avail oneself of the requisite space, that the tent of the ḥag was in earlier times the tent of *rendez-vous* or of assignation, in which the people at their festivals met by appointment the divinity or his representatives. Such tents of assignation are still in use in the pilgrimages of Islam at Mecca, and are known to have been constructed and afterwards burned on the 'tent-day' of the triduan festival of Isis at Tithorea in Phocis. The context of Pausanias, to whom we owe our information (10. 32. 14-18), suggests that the same was true of the rites of Isis held at Coptus in Egypt. The tent of meeting or assignation was often connected with the shrine of the god, most commonly on its roof, whence hierodules received the name 'prostitutes on the roof.' Whether at Rome, in the case of Paulina, the meeting occurred in the upper chamber or in some other, we do not learn from Josephus. Even now a sukkah may be attached to a synagogue, though its primitive use is doubtless forgotten. However, the union of Paulina with Anubis in the chamber of the temple of Isis was unquestionably regarded by her as a rite of initiation of a certain degree. In fact, as I hope to show on another occasion, initiation was in ancient times always in form either a nuptial or a prenuptial rite, in which the divinity might be represented by a human substitute. Hence there cannot have been anything irregular about the case of Paulina except the intrusion of an unauthorized representative of the god in the person of Mundus, who procured the privilege by bribery. So much for the 'tents' or hangings of the temple.

As may be shown by numerous instances from various lands, the weaving of these tents or hangings fell to the female hierodules, who were sometimes entrusted to the safe-keeping of male hierodules or eunuchs. It will suffice here to cite an example from the Old Testament, which shows that the practice was not

¹ The 'tent' (אֹהֶל) of meeting' did not differ essentially from the sukkah, as is shown by Hosea 12, 9. The 'tent' was conceived as an upper chamber resting upon the house of Jehovah (Exodus 26, 7); cp. the temple of Bel, Herod. 1. 181.

unknown in Israel. Among the reforms of King Josiah it is recorded (ii. Kings 23, 7) that "he brake down the houses (tents) of the sodomites, that were in the house of Jehovah, where the women wove hangings (tents) for the Asherah." These 'women' were unquestionably hierodules or temple prostitutes, entrusted to the safe-keeping of eunuchs.²

It will be urged by way of objection that whatever might have been true of ancient Israel, so long as the influence of the cults of the Baalim made itself felt, such conduct as is here supposed to have been imputed to the Jews in the case of Fulvia was unthinkable in Judaism at the beginning of the Christian era. Had not the reforms of King Josiah, and the Deuteronomic and Priestly codes intervened and effectively purged the temple at Jerusalem? It is not necessary for our argument to prove that the ancient practices actually were continued: it would equally well suffice if it were merely shown that they were familiar enough from other Semitic cults to lead the Roman authorities to interpret the advances of the Jews to Fulvia as solicitation to become a temple prostitute. But it is in fact a questionable assumption that the abuses against which the Prophets inveighed and the Law provided penalties were ever wholly done away before the destruction of the second temple; for even if the efforts at reform had succeeded, there were many circumstances that tended of necessity to re-introduce practices not consonant with the loftier ideals of the Jewish people. It may be questioned whether orthodox Judaism ever for long dominated the population of Palestine. Judaism was a church among many dissenters, not a few of whom were reckoned as its members. Since the enforced conversion of the Idumaeans in the time of John Hyrcanus there must have been large numbers of professed Jews who continued the ancient heathen practices within or without the temple at Jerusalem. Truly there were many called Jews who were not the chosen people of Jehovah.

² For the existence of hierodules in Israel see Stade, *Bibl. Theologie des Alt. Testaments* I, pp. 133 sq. He omits, however, the significant passage (Num. 31, 40) about the thirty-two virgins who fell to Jehovah from the spoil of the Midianites. They cannot have been regarded otherwise than as hierodules. The passage is, however, recognized as a very late addition to P. Hence the fact that hierodules in the service of Jehovah are here taken as a matter of course is perhaps the strongest evidence of the persistence of the institution in Judaism.

These are general considerations deserving of being duly weighed; but it is not necessary to rest the case here, as there is specific evidence of the greatest value. The non-canonical Christian gospels of the nativity supply testimony which cannot well be impugned on the ground of bad faith or prejudice. A quotation from the *Protevangelium of James* (cc. 10-11) will suffice to show that the practice of pre-exilic times was not thought to be impossible in the time of Augustus. "And there was held a council of the priests," we read, "saying, Let us make a veil for the temple of the Lord. And the priest said, Call me undefiled virgins of the tribe of David; and the servitors departed and sought, and they found seven virgins. And the priest bethought him of the child Mary, that she was of the tribe of David and undefiled unto the Lord, and the servitors went and brought her. And they led the virgins into the temple of the Lord and the priest said, Determine me by lot who shall weave the gold, and the white, and the byssus, and the silk, and the blue, and the scarlet, and the true purple. And the true purple and the scarlet fell to the lot of Mary, and she took it and went to her house.³ And at that time Zacharias was dumb, and Samuel served in his stead until Zacharias spake. And Mary took the scarlet and span it. And she took her pitcher and went out to fill it with water; ⁴ and lo, a voice, saying, Hail, thou that hast found favor, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And she looked round to right and left, wondering whence the voice came. And she went away trembling to her house, and rested the pitcher, and seated herself on her chair, taking the purple, and drew it out. And lo, an angel of the Lord stood before her

³The word is *oikos*, but it may well mean tent: cf. the 𐤀𐤓𐤏 of the sodomites, ii. Kings 23, 7, the same word as is used for the 'hangings' of the Asherah. Gen. 27, 15 it means a tent (LXX. *oikos*). Pseudo-Matthew represents Mary and her five virgin companions as lodging in the 'house' of Joseph, whom the non-canonical gospels represent as a priest, chosen for this service by a device modelled on the procedure in the case of Aaron.

⁴Myth and legend know no insignificant details; whatever they relate is included because it has a meaning, though we may not be able in every instance to determine it. It is probable that the water was to serve for the bridal bath. Mary was to be the bride both of God and of Joseph.

saying, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor before the Lord of All; and thou shalt conceive according to His word."

Can any one question that this account represents Mary as a hierodule, the bride of the Lord of All, meeting Him or His angel in her 'house' in the temple at Jerusalem? Observe that it was while she was there engaged in spinning the true purple for the veil of the temple that there was brought to her by a messenger of the Lord the beatific annunciation of the divine favor which was to make her indeed the virgin bride of the Lord of All and the mother of the Saviour. Whether or not such a thing actually occurred from time to time in the temple at Jerusalem, we need not pause at present to inquire. It requires no proof that devout Christians of Syria, many of whom must have been converted Jews, during the second century of the Christian era not only conceived it as possible, but founded their faith in part on the belief that in the case of Mary it was a literal fact.

One readily sees that the story of Paulina, as related by Josephus, and that of Fulvia, as we are thus enabled to reconstruct it, are quite as closely parallel as our analysis of the historical data would lead us to expect. The connection of Fulvia with the purple⁵ destined for the temple at Jerusalem suggests the character of the hopes which may well have been held out to her by the Jewish impostors. At all events there was abundant justification for the interpretation of their conduct if Tiberius regarded it as solicitation to turn temple prostitute.

If we take this view of the affair of Fulvia we have an adequate explanation of the data. The measures of the Roman authorities and the practical identification of the Egyptian and Jewish rites in the account of Tacitus become intelligible. There remains the cause for the persecution of the Jews alleged by Josephus. On the view here suggested the statement of the Jewish historian is indeed inadequate, as every thoughtful reader must have found it; but it gives at least a part of the truth. If Josephus did not tell the whole story, it may be that he was

⁵ Pseudo-Matthew, c. 9, enlarges on the significance of the purple. Because it falls to Mary her companions tauntingly call her the queen of the virgins; but an angel appears and declares that the purple is a prophecy, not a subject for taunting. The prophecy is fulfilled by the angel of the annunciation.

unwilling to relate details which must inevitably compromise his people; but it may be, also, that he honestly held that the sole offense actually proved against his guilty co-religionists was that of misappropriating the contributions solicited from Fulvia for the behoof of the temple. Be that as it may, the Roman authorities, interpreting and weighing the evidence, might with good reason have felt justified in regarding the cases of Paulina and Fulvia as at least in intention parallel, and might deem the Jews more obnoxious than the Egyptians because of their well known zeal in proselytizing the women of Rome.

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